

# STRATEGIES FOR EVOKING CHANGE TALK

These therapeutic strategies that are likely to elicit and support change talk in motivational interviewing:

1. **Ask Evocative Questions:** Ask an open question, the answer to which is likely to be change talk.
2. **Explore Decisional Balance:** Ask for the pros and cons of both changing and staying the same.
3. **Good Things/Not-So-Good Things:** Ask about the positives and negatives of the target behavior.
4. **Ask for Elaboration/Examples:** When a change talk theme emerges, ask for more details. “In what ways?” “Tell me more?” “What does that look like?” “When was the last time that happened?”
5. **Look Back:** Ask about a time before the target behavior emerged. How were things better, different?
6. **Look Forward:** Ask what may happen if things continue as they are (status quo). Try the miracle question: If you were 100% successful in making the changes you want, what would be different? How would you like your life to be five years from now?
7. **Query Extremes:** What are the worst things that might happen if you don’t make this change? What are the best things that might happen if you do make this change?
8. **Use Change Rulers:** Ask: “On a scale from 1 to 10, how important is it to you to change [the specific target behavior] where 1 is not at all important, and a 10 is extremely important? Follow up: “And why are you at \_\_\_\_ and not \_\_\_\_\_ [a lower number than stated]?” “What might happen that could move you from \_\_\_\_ to [a higher number]?” Alternatively, you could also ask “How confident are that you could make the change if you decided to do it?”
9. **Explore Goals and Values:** Ask what the person’s guiding values are. What do they want in life? Using a values card sort activity can be helpful here. Ask how the continuation of target behavior fits in with the person’s goals or values. Does it help realize an important goal or value, interfere with it, or is it irrelevant?
10. **Come Alongside:** Explicitly side with the negative (status quo) side of ambivalence. “Perhaps \_\_\_\_\_ is so important to you that you won’t give it up, no matter what the cost.”